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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/53/1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This morning the General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting on 15 September 1998, will first take up agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", to hear a brief presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to this fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I believe this could be a singularly inspiring and forward-looking session. Indeed, it could open new vistas for the Organization, and even for the world, provided we have the courage to confront what lies before us with open eyes.

When I spoke to you from this podium a year ago, my emphasis was on reform of the United Nations itself. Reform was and is essential if we are to play our full part in the new era.

Today, I can say with satisfaction that the "quiet revolution" is happening. The United Nations family has begun to act with greater unity of purpose and coherence of effort than it did a year ago. This is particularly true of the Secretariat and its relations with the programmes and funds.

That does not mean that we can rest on our laurels. Reform is an ongoing process, and I shall continue working on ways to improve our performance. During this session I hope you, the Member States, will carry the process forward, by adopting further measures to refine or revise those aspects of the Organization which only you have the power to change.

But probably the single greatest impediment to good performance is the financial straitjacket within which we operate. Financial stringency is a feature of today's world: it has helped concentrate our minds on giving you better value for your money. But without money there can be no value. Stringency is one thing, and a starvation diet is quite another.

I appeal once again to those few Member States who have fallen seriously behind in their contributions to follow the good example set by others. There can be no substitute for full and timely payment of what is due.

Reform is gradually giving us a more functional United Nations, meaning one that can perform the tasks assigned to it by Member States. We need to define the new challenges we face and devise suitable means for meeting them.

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In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, our founders had both the chance and the obligation to recast the world order, creating this Organization to save future generations from repeating the ordeal which they had faced. Today, we in our turn are living through a vast transformation.

In some ways our task is even more difficult than that of our founders. They could work from a tabula rasa, whereas we have to respect established procedures and overcome long-ingrained habits of thought. They faced the awesome but clearly defined challenge of world war, while we are wrestling with new political uncertainties and with forces of economic change which are very hard to pin down.

But an accident of the calendar gives us a precise and dramatic deadline to focus our minds: the opening of the third millennium.

You have agreed to designate your fifty-fifth session, which falls in the year 2000, as a Millennium Assembly. I have proposed to present a report to you on that occasion, outlining a set of workable objectives for the Organization as it moves into the new era, along with institutional means for achieving them.

We have exactly two years before that Millennium Assembly. My idea is that we should use those two years to reflect carefully on what we need to do. We are not going to tear up the Charter and write a new one. Nor will we produce a blueprint for Utopia. What we must do is identify a select few of the world's most pressing problems and set ourselves a precise, achievable programme for dealing with them. Much, if not all, of that programme, I suspect, will be subsumed under a single rubric which has become the catchword of our time: globalization.

I believe that, taken all in all, over the long term, globalization will be positive. It draws peoples closer together and offers many of us choices that our grandparents could not even dream of. It enables us to produce more efficiently and allows some of us, at least, to improve our quality of life.

But, alas, these benefits are far from being felt equally by all. The long-term positive change, for millions of our fellow human beings, simply is too far off to be meaningful. Millions still live on the margins of the global economy. Millions more are experiencing globalization not as an opportunity, but as a force of disruption or destruction, as an assault on their material standards of living or on their traditional way of life. And those who feel marginalized in this way are growing more and more numerous.

The Asian downturn has triggered a worldwide economic crisis, with devastating social consequences. Some of the most successful economies have been plunged into recession at a speed which has taken the whole international community by surprise.

As usual, it is the most vulnerable groups which are hardest hit. And the countries whose economies had taken only the first faltering steps on the road to recovery are the ones that now find themselves in greatest jeopardy. The crisis has now spread to Russia. Even the markets of North America and Europe are not immune. President Clinton recently recognized the threat which this wildfire poses, even to the largest economy in the world.

We have to get together to find the answers, but who should sit at the table? The day is past when the seven major industrialized Powers could, or should, take on the task alone. Nor can this crisis be left only to finance ministers and central bankers, although their contribution is essential. I have no desire to belittle the role of the institutions where they get together, such as the Bank for International Settlements, the World Trade Organization or our beloved sister organizations in Washington, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. As many here know, I have worked hard to forge closer ties between the United Nations and those bodies, and I am glad to say they have been very responsive. They want to work with us, and we must be ready to work with them. All parts of the international system need to come together to find global solutions to this truly global crisis.

For the issues this crisis raises are not just financial or economic, or social or political, for that matter: they are all of those things at once. They must be addressed on all those fronts. They must be dealt with both locally and globally. That is why I believe that this institution, the United Nations — which is the global institution par excellence — has an inescapable duty to respond. I therefore look forward to United Nations participation in discussions on the new world "financial architecture", such as those suggested by President Clinton.

Technical economic and financial strategies are certainly needed. But we have to define the political framework within which they can be applied. And we have to make sure that the interests of those so far left

behind by globalization are not forgotten. Our special responsibility is to restore development to its rightful and central place in global economic strategy.

On the eve of the millennium, the needs and aspirations of the great majority of human beings can still be expressed simply and starkly: safe water, shelter from violence — that of nature and that of one's fellow men — enough food for the family, a job, schooling for the children and a State which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their consent.

We should not forget that the present crisis springs partly from the neglect of political factors during the years when some believed that market forces alone would bring worldwide prosperity. It was sometimes forgotten, in the exuberance of rapidly rising wealth, that in the long term a healthy economy depends on healthy politics: the politics of good governance, social justice and the rule of law.

I am not suggesting a one-size-fits-all political model as a panacea for all the problems of globalization. That would be as misguided as the one-size-fits-all economic policy which has now come to grief in many countries. Local traditions and circumstances must be borne in mind, both in politics and in economics. But certain principles are common to all.

They include legitimate, responsive, clean government, whatever its form; respect for human rights and the rights of minorities; freedom of expression; and the right to a fair trial. If these essential, universal pillars are neglected, the structure of both State and economy is deficient and is more likely to collapse when the storm comes. This means that the greatest challenge posed by globalization is that of good governance in the broadest sense.

Let me now turn briefly to the work of the Organization over the past year. I will not bore the Assembly with a recapitulation of my annual report, which I am sure all have read by now from cover to cover. But forgive me if I draw attention to a few of our successes and tell the Assembly candidly where I feel we are currently failing.

The thing I am happiest about is not what we do by ourselves but the fruitful cooperation between this Organization and non-State actors which, taken together, form the embryo of a global civil society. Two shining examples from the past year are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the coalition of nongovernmental organizations which lobbied for an International Criminal Court.

The former was the driving force behind the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, which I am delighted to say entered into force with the fortieth ratification last week. The latter, of course, helped us achieve the Statute of the International Criminal Court, whose adoption in Rome I was privileged to witness in July. This promises, at last, to supply what has for so long been the missing link in the international legal system: a permanent court to judge the crimes of gravest concern to the international community — genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. This month the first judgement by an international court for the crime of genocide, delivered by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, showed us that the institutions of international justice can have teeth. It also gives us hope that the International Criminal Court will before too long fulfil its aim of putting an end to the shameful era in which a murderer is more likely to be convicted for killing one person than for killing 100,000.

Gradually, with the help of civil society, the United Nations and its Members States are strengthening the international legal order. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes us conscious this year more than ever of our responsibilities in this field.

The help we get from civil society in establishing legal norms and strengthening human rights is one of the positive aspects of globalization. But here too the coin has its negative side.

The non-State actors which exploit the new openness and technology of communication are not all so benign. Alongside global civil society there is what I call uncivil society: the network of terrorism, trafficking — in human beings as well as illicit substances — and organized crime.

We had perhaps the most frightening glimpse yet of this uncivil society a few weeks ago, with the terrorist bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Terrorism is a global menace which clearly calls for global action. Individual actions by Member States, whether aimed at State or non-state actors, cannot in themselves provide a solution. We must meet this threat together.

What shocks us about terrorism is its indiscriminate character. Unhappily, we have also to be concerned about

violence that is more precisely targeted. I regret to report that this year has seen a dramatic increase in attacks on United Nations and associated personnel. This prompts us to reflect on the conditions in which we send civilian staff into war zones where, too often, combatants seem less and less willing to respect their neutral status.

I regret to say, also, that the perpetrators of these attacks are almost never brought to justice. Let us hope that this will begin to change now that we have the Rome Statute, which defines intentional attacks against humanitarian and peacekeeping staff as a war crime.

I dwell on that point because I am responsible for the staff and for the ability of the United Nations to carry out its mandate. But unhappily, humanity as a whole has much larger threats to worry about. During the past year, the United Nations has been engaged in many parts of the world, often in difficult and dangerous conditions, in the sensitive diplomacy of peacemaking. I myself went to Iraq to try to achieve full compliance with Security Council resolutions — something which, unhappily, has still not been realized.

Elsewhere, I believe we have had some successes in preventing conflict, though one can never absolutely prove that without our efforts conflict would have happened.

Where we fail, by contrast, the results are all too visible. And the truth is, we are still far from achieving the primary task laid on us by our founders, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Two examples have preyed especially on my mind in recent days: the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, with its horrific human rights violations, is now perilously close to drawing in neighbouring States. And in Kosovo the international community seems to be watching impotently while the kind of brutal and indiscriminate abuses we saw in Bosnia are repeated — something we swore must never happen again.

Once again we find ourselves deploying desperate humanitarian efforts to deal with consequences when we should be addressing the political roots of conflict.

I know the Security Council has both these conflicts on its agenda, and I can only hope it will find effective ways of recalling the parties to their obligations under the Charter.

Meanwhile, the spectre of nuclear annihilation continues to haunt us. As is well known, two new countries have chosen this year to conduct their first nuclear tests.

And finally, I must say a word about my own continent of Africa. There too there have been successes, notably the restoration of the democratically elected Government in Sierra Leone. In April, at the request of the Security Council, I submitted a report on the causes of conflict in Africa, which was well received. Some useful follow-up work has also been done.

But not only has conflict continued in many African countries; it has also broken out in several new ones, and in one case between two Member States.

I am especially concerned by the apparent crumbling of the peace process in Angola, a country where the United Nations has made enormous efforts for peace, particularly under the leadership of Maître Alioune Blondin Beye, whose death in June was such a blow to all of us.

And worst of all, I believe, is the new conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which the forces of at least five African States are now involved and which adds a new twist to the long-running agony of the Great Lakes. I feel acute concern for the ordinary people of that region, who have suffered so much in recent years, including the scourge of deliberately fomented racial hatred. A special effort by the international community is needed if stability is to be restored there and the suffering brought to an end.

I make no apology for ending on such a bleak note. My intention is not to leave the Assembly in despair. On the contrary, if we in this Hall really make up our minds to pool our resources, to set aside our differences and to work together, there is almost nothing we could not achieve.

In particular, we need to rediscover the connection between peace and economic security — the unifying principle on which this Organization was founded. We need to learn again the lesson of which one of our founders, Franklin D. Roosevelt, spoke, in the year of his death and of this Organization's birth. He said that

> "we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away. We have learned that we must

live as men, and not as ostriches, nor as dogs in the manger. We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community." *(Fourth Inaugural Address, 20 January 1945)*

He understood, in other words, that if there is no development, no hope for the poorest, even the richest on this planet will not be safe.

This Assembly is not short of work. I have already detained it too long, and I thank members for their indulgence. Now let us get on with it.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I also remind members of another decision, taken by the Assembly at the same meeting, that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on 23 September 1998 at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimate speaking times that are as accurate as possible? This will facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I should now like to call to the attention of members paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, whereby the General Assembly indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate. Within this given time-frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed, so that interpretation of statements may be provided properly.

I now give the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, the Minister for Foreign Relations of Brazil, Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil): Mr. President, your election to preside over the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly is especially gratifying for us Brazilians. Brazil and Uruguay came into being as sister nations, and our bonds are becoming ever stronger. With each passing day, our destinies are more and more linked together. The opportunity I have of working closely with my friend, Didier Opertti, allows me to say with conviction that at this session the Assembly will have a formidable President. In the exercise of this important task, you will benefit from the example set by your predecessor. At the helm of the fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko was able to guide and motivate delegations and to provide valuable impulse to the proposals for reform put forward by the Secretary-General.

Because of his dedication to the task of modernizing our Organization and, above all, because of his decisive role in situations that pose a real threat to international peace and security, the Secretary-General deserves our applause. The diplomatic talent and serene daring revealed by Mr. Kofi Annan confirm that we have in him a leader who is up to the challenges and opportunities before us. It was an honour for us to have welcomed him in Brazil this past July.

The defining trait of this particular moment is the troubling instability that besets global financial markets. Since the last quarter of 1997, when we first felt the shock waves of what was then called the "Asian crisis", the world economy has been suffering the effects of a phenomenon whose reach, depth and permanence are still not clear. But the international community cannot wait, with arms crossed, for the course of events to shed light on our quandary.

It is both legitimate and necessary that Governments act to try to prevent problems that may arise. In an era marked by the rapid integration of national economies, such action by Governments will increasingly have to be made through coordination in the international sphere.

Although there is still no consensus as to the dimension of the crisis we face, nor on the prognosis for its duration, there seems to be a growing convergence of points of view regarding the impact of the high volatility of capital movements. The events of the past few months have revealed a serious lag between growing financial interdependence and the modest effectiveness of existing international mechanisms for dialogue and coordination.

Since the beginning of his Administration, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil has been calling the attention of other world leaders to the task of making the global financial system more stable and predictable. In repeated messages to G-7 members, beginning in 1995, he offered concrete proposals: to increase cooperation among monetary authorities; to expand coordination of macroeconomic policies among countries that can have considerable impact on world finance; to upgrade international monitoring capacity over domestic macroeconomic policy; and to expand mechanisms aimed at stabilizing currencies under speculative attack. There have been, of course, considerable advances along some of these lines, but the measures adopted still fall far short of what is needed. Until now, political will has not corresponded to the magnitude and gravity of the situation. The crisis will not resolve itself. We must join together to face it.

In this, as in other fields of international life, we must avoid at all costs an attitude that, back in the seventies, Brazilian Foreign Minister Azeredo da Silveira described as "the postponement syndrome".

Experience teaches us that inaction can have a high cost. It also teaches that answers given by various countries to crisis situations, if guided by irrational or spur-of-the-moment reactions, can turn these situations into even greater problems, prolonging their effects over time and aggravating people's suffering.

One can imagine extreme scenarios of a return to closed economic models, to the search for elusive self-sufficiency and isolation, to notions of national security based on distrust of others and on the insecurity of others. Such scenarios must not become reality. We cannot allow it.

Progress in international relations depends fundamentally on the perception of the international arena not as a source of potential threat, but as an environment in which risks can be reduced and difficulties overcome by a pooling of wills and resources.

Ours is not a world in which nations should be left to their own devices. The cost of such a course is invariably higher than the energy or resources saved by attempts to distance oneself from the problems of others. The willingness to deal collectively with problems will motivate individual countries to believe in the benefit of seeking international consideration of matters in their direct interest. The world cannot depend only on the willingness, capacity and interest of a select number of countries to mobilize and lead international efforts in this or that direction.

We can no longer accept situations, such as the present financial crisis, in which, despite the undeniably international nature of the phenomenon, Governments and societies simply do not fully trust any of the existing organizations or mechanisms as a source of support, guidance or even interpretation of the problem at hand. We must give serious consideration to the fact that growing interdependence renders indispensable effective governance at the international level.

We have before us an essentially political challenge. This does not mean simply modernizing decision-making procedures or administrative structures, but also giving to multilateral treatment of issues the priority it so often receives in our speeches and statements.

A large gap still remains between the recognition that the central problems facing humanity must be dealt with at the international level and the resistance of Governments and societies to act in accordance with that recognition. This is most evident in the allocation of resources and in the adoption of policies capable of generating external repercussions.

In that same vein, if the link between the national and the international is ever greater, peace and development are also increasingly related. A world racked by economic instability or despair cannot be a safe environment, free of the threat of war, conflict and violence. But the reverse is also true: material and social progress presupposes minimal conditions of security and peaceful coexistence among and within countries. We must advance on both fronts by working to establish a climate of confidence in the political-strategic realm and in the essential context of the global economy.

Brazil's relative weight and the history of our international behaviour are some of our country's most important credentials. These credentials are strengthened

today by the maturity of our democracy and by the vigorous modernization of the Brazilian economy.

Under the leadership of President Cardoso, we have renewed our permanent willingness to play a more active role in building a world order conducive to peace and development. This spirit guides Brazil's international action, particularly within the United Nations.

I wish to point out that, in the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, our delegation, led by Ambassador Celso Amorim, has faithfully reflected this central guideline of Brazilian foreign policy.

In 1998, we have completed our participation in the international non-proliferation regime. We have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was approved by Brazil's National Congress this past July. Three days ago in Washington, I had the satisfaction of personally depositing the instrument of accession to the NPT, in tandem with our Ambassadors in London and Moscow.

These decisions lend formal and symbolic support to the commitment to use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes. This commitment is enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution and is strengthened by the bilateral and regional pacts we have signed. The existing agreements and the cooperation between Brazil and Argentina, as well as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, are exemplary achievements in this field.

Brazil thus feels particularly motivated to call upon nuclear-armed States, and upon those with the capability of producing such weapons, to take decisive steps towards disarmament. We also expect that Governments which have still not become party to the NPT, the CTBT and other relevant instruments and mechanisms will do so at an early date.

As an expression of the determination which motivates us to work for this cause, Brazil, together with seven other friendly countries, signed the "Declaration on a Nuclear Weapon Free World: the Need for a New Agenda" on 9 June of this year. During the current session of the General Assembly, together with our partners in the Declaration, we intend to present a draft resolution aimed at boosting and guiding efforts towards the complete and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons.

There is no longer room or justification for postponing action in the nuclear field or in the broader fight to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. The cost of a failure to do so could be truly catastrophic, and the risks are evident to all.

The Brazilian Government, as the coordinator of the guarantor countries of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, has been making a sustained effort to assist Ecuador and Peru in reaching at the earliest possible date a solid and final agreement on the border differences that have kept them apart for decades. Our diplomatic services — together with those of Argentina, Chile and the United States — stand ready to continue making the best possible contribution.

Recent developments confirm the prognosis that the peace process is on its way to a conclusion and reflect the political will and the high level of engagement with which Ecuador and Peru have been working towards that end.

The fact that South America is a region in which countries essentially live in a harmonious, peaceful and increasingly integrated manner is for Brazil a vital and defining trait that our peoples are determined to preserve.

The same applies to the permanence of democratic regimes as a common thread of the nations in our continent. It is a higher value to which we are collectively committed in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Rio Group and the Organization of American States (OAS).

The advent and consolidation of democracy was the determining factor in the extraordinary work of integration in which South American nations are engaged. This is an accomplishment of our societies that the Governments of the region must always be prepared to defend as one. This is a basic tenet of Brazilian foreign policy.

Brazil attaches the utmost importance to the advancement of human rights. As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we should recognize the persistent gap between principles and generally accepted rules of international law, on the one hand, and the prevalent realities of the world, on the other.

The Brazilian Government is engaged in the fight to overcome the distance between norms and facts in our

country. We are prepared to draw from the international environment elements that may help us realize an aspiration shared by all Brazilians. This was the main thrust of President Cardoso's submission to the National Congress of the decision to recognize the mandatory jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

President Cardoso is also committed to the fight against the drug trade. His presence at the special session of the General Assembly this past June was clear proof of this commitment.

Our participation in the effort to build a lasting peace extends beyond the Americas. The Brazilian military and police have taken part in United Nations forces in many parts of the world, particularly in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, to which we are bound by history and culture.

Brazil has followed developments in Angola with concern. The United Nations must firmly insist that UNITA fulfil the commitments undertaken in the Lusaka Protocol. An unravelling of the situation could jeopardize the progress achieved in the peace process and would be tragic indeed. Angolans have been subjected to untold suffering for decades. The international community must do everything within its reach so that Angola may finally dedicate itself to reconstruction and development.

The Brazilian Government, along with the other members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, is engaged in seeking a peaceful solution to the grave internal crisis faced by Guinea-Bissau. The Community, in close coordination with countries in the region, has contributed to spurring significant progress. We will continue to pursue favourable conditions for the urgent and complete normalization of life in that sister nation.

As for East Timor — to which we are also bound by history and a common language — Brazil welcomes the new spirit that presides over this delicate and complex issue, especially in the context of the tripartite negotiations between the Portuguese and Indonesian Governments, under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

The Brazilian Government has maintained a positive dialogue with the parties involved and is determined to assist, to the limit of its possibilities, in finding an adequate equation for all concerned, with progressive participation by the Timorese themselves.

Since the advent of economic stability in 1994, Brazil has shown renewed dynamism with the strengthening of our domestic market and the outlook for development with social justice.

But present-day Brazil does not see its development as isolated or self-contained. We realize that the destiny of our economy is increasingly linked to that of the economies of our neighbours and partners, in the framework of an integration process that has decidedly contributed to progress in the region and to the well-being of our societies, particularly within MERCOSUR.

The fruits of this process serve not only the goal of economic development but also, and most importantly, the cause of social justice, which remains the foremost task of our region.

We welcome the results of the most recent edition of the United Nations *Human Development Report*. The numbers show that, in spite of all that remains to be done, our country has made extraordinary social progress over the past two decades in the areas of health, education, the fight against poverty and the reduction of disparities among the various regions of the country. Even though we still face daunting challenges, Brazilians are leading a better life, as our presence among those nations of greater human development indicates.

Consistent with its domestic policies and its regional role, Brazil will continue to fight for a more balanced allocation of the benefits of economic interdependence, without distortions such as those resulting from protectionist policies of developed countries.

Such policies affect in a particularly cruel manner the developing countries and serve to reinforce the arguments of those who preach domestically a return to closed economic models. In the current context of global economic turbulence, we must demand that the developed countries establish greater coherence between free-trade rhetoric and their unfair trade practices.

President Cardoso has stated that we must abandon the path of globalization with exclusion — in the decision-making process as well as in the distribution of benefits — and seek globalization with solidarity in both of those dimensions.

Reforming and strengthening the United Nations is an essential part of building a world of greater solidarity.

The Brazilian Government recognizes the significant progress that has already been made in terms of structural and functional modernization of the Organization. We agree with the Secretary-General when he says that reform must not be seen as an event, but as a process; but we cannot but stress that an important part of that process has yet to be undertaken.

For Brazil, reforming the United Nations necessarily implies updating the functioning and composition of the Security Council, which still mirrors a period of history that is now long gone. That does not mean — and I have stated this before in this forum — that the particular interests of this or that country should be taken into account. What it does mean is that fundamental deficiencies in terms of legitimacy, representativeness and effectiveness must be redressed. We will continue to defend expansion in both categories of members, with the presence, in both, of developing countries.

It is inconceivable that, on the eve of the new millennium, reform of the Organization could exclude the restructuring of the Security Council.

The basis of global solidarity is the establishment of trust between societies. There is no other way if we are to establish a peaceful, stable and constructive international environment. Our so-called global village is still far from becoming a truly integrated community, in which people can consider themselves as participants in the same historical process.

Of the many merits of international organizations, one of the most important is that they offer a framework of interaction that favours the development of a true sense of universal communion. In dealing with common problems, Governments learn in practice just how much they need to work more and more closely together. In international forums, we are constantly weaving a web of relations based on a stronger identity and trust between our nations and their leaders. Countries must trust one another, but they must also have a reason to trust in the legitimacy and efficiency of multilateral organizations and procedures in order to tackle their most important problems.

The dynamics of international life demand a constant updating of the instruments at the disposal of the community of nations to allow it to act collectively in the face of its greatest challenges.

We must have the courage to recognize that never before have the risks and the cost of procrastination been so high. We must, above all, have the will to make the decisions that can ultimately restore our faith in ourselves, in our capacity to state that history does goes on, and that we are pointing it in the direction of a more just and better world.

Address by Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William J. Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Let me begin by thanking the Assembly for its very kind and generous welcome and by noting that, at the opening of this fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the world has much to celebrate. Peace has come to Northern Ireland after 29 long years. Bosnia has just held its freest elections ever. The United Nations is actively mediating crises before they explode into war, all around the world. And today more people determine their own destiny than at any previous moment in history.

We celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with those rights more widely embraced than ever before. On every continent people are leading lives of integrity and self-respect, and a great deal of the credit for that belongs to the United Nations.

Still, as every person in this Hall knows, the promise of our time is attended by perils. Global economic turmoil today threatens to undermine confidence in free markets and democracy. Those of us who benefit particularly from this economy have a special responsibility to do more to minimize the turmoil and extend the benefits of global markets to all citizens. And the United States is determined to do that.

We still are bedevilled by ethnic, racial, religious and tribal hatreds, by the spread of weapons of mass

destruction, by the almost frantic efforts of too many States to acquire such weapons.

And, despite all efforts to contain it, terrorism is not fading away with the end of the twentieth century. It is a continuing defiance of article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says

> "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Here at the United Nations, at international summits around the world and on many occasions in the United States, I have had the opportunity to address this subject in detail, to describe what we have done, what we are doing and what we must yet do to combat terror.

Today I would like to talk to the Assembly about why all nations must put the fight against terrorism at the top of our agenda. Obviously this is a matter of profound concern to us. In the last 15 years our citizens have been targeted over and over again: in Beirut; over Lockerbie; in Saudi Arabia; at home in Oklahoma City by one of our own citizens; even here in New York, in one of our most public buildings; and most recently, on 7 August, in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, where Americans who devoted their lives to building bridges between nations — people very much like all of those present — died in a campaign of hatred against the United States.

Because we are blessed to be a wealthy nation, with a powerful military and a worldwide presence active in promoting peace and security, we are often a target. We love our country for its dedication to political and religious freedom, to economic opportunity, to respect for the rights of the individual. But we know that many people see us as a symbol of a system and values they reject. And often they find it expedient to blame us for problems with deep roots elsewhere.

But we are no threat to any peaceful nation, and we believe the best way to disprove these claims is to continue our work for peace and prosperity around the world. For us to pull back from the world's trouble spots, to turn our backs on those taking risks for peace, to weaken our own opposition to terrorism, would hand the enemies of peace a victory they must never have.

Still, it is a grave misconception to see terrorism as only, or even mostly, an American problem. Indeed, it is a clear and present danger to tolerant and open societies and innocent people everywhere. No one in this room, nor the people represented here, is immune. Certainly not the people of Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. For every American killed there, roughly 20 Africans were murdered and 500 more injured — innocent people going about their business on a busy morning.

Not the people of Omagh, in Northern Ireland, where the wounded and killed were Catholics and Protestants alike — mostly children and women, two of them pregnant — people out shopping together when their future was snuffed out by a fringe group clinging to the past.

Not the people of Japan, who were poisoned by sarin gas in the Tokyo subway.

Not the people of Argentina, who died when a car bomb destroyed a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires.

Not the people of Kashmir and Sri Lanka, killed by ancient animosities that cry out for resolution.

Not the Palestinians and Israelis, who still die year after year, for all their progress towards peace.

Not the people of Algeria, enduring a nightmare of unfathomable terror with still no end in sight.

Not the people of Egypt, who nearly lost a second President to assassination.

Not the people of Turkey, Colombia, Albania, Russia, Iran, Indonesia and countless other nations where innocent people have been victimized by terror.

None of those victims were American. But every one was a son or daughter, a husband or wife, a father or mother — a human life extinguished by someone else's hatred, leaving a circle of people whose lives will never be the same.

Terror has become the world's problem. Some argue, of course, that the problem is overblown, saying that the number of deaths from terrorism is comparatively small, sometimes less than the number of people killed by lightning in a single year. I believe that misses the point in several ways. First, terrorism has a new face in the 1990s. Today, terrorists take advantage of greater openness and the explosion of information and weapons technology. The new technologies of terror and their increasing availability, along with the increasing mobility

of terrorists, raise chilling prospects of vulnerability to chemical, biological and other kinds of attacks, bringing each of us into the category of possible victim. This is a threat to all humankind.

Beyond the physical damage of each attack, there is an even greater residue of psychological damage, hard to measure but slow to heal. Every bomb, every bomb threat, has an insidious effect on free and open institutions; the kinds of institutions everyone in this body is working so hard to build. Each time an innocent man or woman or child is killed, it makes the future more hazardous for the rest of us, for each violent act saps the confidence that is so crucial to peace and prosperity.

In every corner of the world, with the active support of United Nations agencies, people are struggling to build better futures based on bonds of trust connecting them with their fellow citizens and with partners and investors from around the world. The glimpse of growing prosperity in Northern Ireland was a crucial factor in the Good Friday Agreement. But that took confidence, confidence that cannot be bought in times of violence. We can measure each attack in the grisly statistics of dead and wounded. But what are the wounds we cannot measure? In the Middle East, in Asia, in South America — how many agreements have been thwarted after bombs blew up? How many businesses will never be created in places crying out for investments of time and money? How many talented young people in countries represented here have turned their backs on public service? The question is not only how many lives have been lost in each attack, but how many futures were lost in their aftermath.

There is no justification for killing innocents. Ideology, religion and politics, even deprivation and righteous grievance, do not justify it. We must seek to understand the roiled waters in which terror occurs. Of course we must. Often in my own experience I have seen that where peace is making progress, terror is a desperate act to turn back the tide of history. The Omagh bombing came as peace was succeeding in Northern Ireland. In the Middle East, whenever we get close to another step towards peace, its enemies respond with terror. We must not let this stall our momentum. The bridging of ancient hatreds is, after all, a leap of faith — a break with the past — and thus a frightening threat to those who cannot let go of their own hatred. Because they fear the future, in these cases terrorists seek to blow the peacemakers back into the past.

We must also acknowledge that there are economic sources of this rage as well. Poverty, inequality and masses of disenfranchised young people are fertile fields for the siren call of the terrorists and their claims of advancing social justice. But deprivation cannot justify destruction; nor can inequity ever atone for murder. The killing of innocents is not a social programme.

Nevertheless, our resolute opposition to terrorism does not mean we can ever be indifferent to the conditions that foster it. The most recent United Nations *Human Development Report* suggests the gulf is widening between the world's haves and have-nots. We must work harder to treat the sources of despair before they turn into the poison of hatred.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once wrote that the only revolutionary is a man who has nothing to lose. We must show people they have everything to gain by embracing cooperation and renouncing violence. This is not simply an American or a Western responsibility; it is the world's responsibility. Developing nations have an obligation to spread new wealth fairly, to create new opportunities, to build new, open economies. Developed nations have an obligation to help developing nations stay on the path of prosperity and to spur global economic growth. A week ago I outlined ways we can build a stronger international economy to benefit not only all nations, but all citizens within them.

Some believe that terrorism's principal fault line centres on what they see as an inevitable clash of civilizations. This is an issue that deserves a lot of debate in this great Hall. Specifically, many believe there is an inevitable clash between Western civilization and values and Islamic civilization and values. I believe this view is terribly wrong. False prophets may use and abuse any religion to justify whatever political objectives they have — even cold-blooded murder. Some may have the world believe that Almighty God Himself, the merciful, grants a licence to kill; but that is not our understanding of Islam.

A quarter of the world's population is Muslim, from Africa to the Middle East to Asia and to the United States, where Islam is one of our fastest growing faiths. There are over 1,200 mosques and Islamic centres in the United States, and that number is rapidly increasing. The 6 million Americans who worship there will tell you there is no inherent clash between Islam and America. Americans respect and honour Islam.

As I talk to Muslim leaders in my country and around the world, I see again that we share the same hopes and aspirations: to live in peace and security, to provide for our children, to follow the faith of our choosing, to build a better life than our parents knew and to pass on brighter possibilities to our children.

Of course, we are not identical. There are important differences that cross race and culture and religion which demand understanding and deserve respect. But every river has a crossing place. Even as we struggle here in America, like the United Nations, to reconcile all Americans to each other and to find greater unity in our increasing diversity, we will remain on a course of friendship with and respect for the Muslim world. We will continue to look for common values, common interests and common endeavours. I agree very much with the spirit expressed by these words of Mohammed: "Rewards for prayers by people assembled together are twice those for prayers said at home."

When it comes to terrorism, there should be no dividing line between Muslims and Jews, Protestants and Catholics, Serbs and Albanians, developed societies and emerging countries. The only dividing line is between those who practise, support or tolerate terror and those who understand that it is murder, plain and simple.

If terrorism is at the top of the American agenda and should be at the top of the world's agenda, what, then, are the concrete steps we can take together to protect our common destiny? What are our common obligations? At least, I believe, they are these: to give terrorists no support, no sanctuary, no financial assistance; to bring pressure on States that do; to act together to step up extradition and prosecution; to sign the global anti-terror conventions; to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and enforce the Chemical Weapons Convention; to promote stronger domestic laws and control the manufacture and export of explosives; to raise international standards for airport security; to combat the conditions that spread violence and despair.

We are working to do our part. Our intelligence and law enforcement communities are tracking terrorist networks in cooperation with other Governments. Some of those we believe responsible for the recent bombing of our embassies have been brought to justice. Early this week I will ask our Congress to provide emergency funding to repair our embassies, to improve security, to expand the worldwide fight against terrorism and to help our friends in Kenya and Tanzania with the wounds they have suffered. But no matter how much each of us does alone, our progress will be limited without our common efforts.

We will also do our part to address the sources of despair and alienation through the Agency for International Development in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, in Eastern Europe, in Haiti and elsewhere. We will continue our strong support for the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank and the World Food Programme. We also recognize the critical role these agencies play and the importance of all countries, including the United States, in paying their fair share.

In closing, let me urge all of us to think in new terms on terrorism, to see it not as a clash of cultures, or political action by other means, or a divine calling, but as a clash between the forces of the past and the forces of the future, between those who tear down and those who build up, between hope and fear, between chaos and community.

The fight will not be easy. But every nation will be strengthened in joining it, in working to give real meaning to the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we signed 50 years ago. It is very, very important that we do this together.

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the authors of the Universal Declaration. She said, in one of her many speeches in support of the United Nations when it was just beginning,

> "All agreements and all peace are built on confidence. You cannot have peace and you cannot get on with other people in the world unless you have confidence in them."

It is not necessary that we solve all the world's problems to have confidence in one another. It is not necessary that we agree on all the world's issues to have confidence in one another. It is not even necessary that we understand every single difference among us to have confidence in one another. But it is necessary that we affirm our belief in the primacy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and therefore that together we say that terror is not a way to tomorrow. It is only a throwback to yesterday, and together, together we can

meet it and overcome its threats, its injuries and its fears with confidence.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mandela: Mr. President, may I take this opportunity, as President of the Republic of South Africa and as Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement, to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your election to the high post of President of the General Assembly.

You will be presiding over this august Assembly of the nations of the world at a time when its deliberations and decisions will be of the greatest consequence to the continuous striving of humanity at last to achieve global peace and prosperity.

The Non-Aligned Movement, as well as my own country, which is a proud member of that Movement, invests great trust in this Organization to discharge its responsibilities to all nations, especially at this critical period of its existence.

Quite appropriately, this fifty-third session of the General Assembly will be remembered through the ages as the moment at which we marked and celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Born in the aftermath of the defeat of the Nazi and fascist crime against humanity, this Declaration held high the hope that all our societies would, in future, be built on the foundations of the glorious vision spelt out in each of its clauses.

For those who had to fight for their emancipation, those such as ourselves, who, with United Nations help, had to free ourselves from the criminal apartheid system, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights served as the vindication of the justice of our cause.

At the same time, it constituted a challenge to us that our freedom, once achieved, should be dedicated to the implementation of the perspectives contained in the Declaration.

Today we celebrate the fact that this historic document has survived a turbulent five decades, which have seen some of the most extraordinary developments in the evolution of human society.

These include the collapse of the colonial system, the passing of a bipolar world, breathtaking advances in science and technology and the achievement of the complex process of globalization.

And yet, at the end of it all, the human beings who are the subject of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continue to be afflicted by wars and violent conflicts.

They have, as yet, not attained their freedom from fear of death that would be brought about by the use of weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional arms.

Many are still unable to exercise the fundamental and inalienable democratic rights that would enable them to participate in the determination of the destiny of their countries, nations, families and children and to protect themselves from tyranny and dictatorship.

The very right to be human is denied every day to hundreds of millions of people as a result of poverty and the unavailability of basic necessities, such as food, jobs, water and shelter, education, health care and a healthy environment.

The failure to achieve the vision contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights finds dramatic expression in the contrast between wealth and poverty

which characterizes the divide between the countries of the North and the countries of the South and within individual countries in all hemispheres.

It is made especially poignant and challenging by the fact that this coexistence of wealth and poverty, the perpetuation of the practice of the resolution of inter-State and intra-State conflicts by war and the denial of the democratic right of many across the world, all result from acts of commission and omission, particularly by those who occupy positions of leadership in politics, in the economy, and in other spheres of human activity.

What I am trying to say is that all these social ills, which constitute an offence against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are not a preordained result of the forces of nature or the product of a curse of the deities.

They are the consequence of decisions which men and women take or refuse to take, men and women all of whom will not hesitate to pledge their devoted support for the vision conveyed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This Declaration was proclaimed as universal precisely because the founders of this Organization and the nations of the world that joined hands to fight the scourge of fascism, including many that still had to achieve their own emancipation, understood clearly that our human world was an interdependent whole. Necessarily, the values of happiness, justice, human dignity, peace and prosperity have a universal application, because each people and every individual is entitled to them. Similarly, no people can truly say it is blessed with happiness, peace and prosperity where others, as human as themselves, continue to be afflicted with misery, conflict, terrorism and deprivation.

Thus can we say that the challenge posed by the next 50 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by the next century whose character it must help to fashion, consists in whether humanity, and especially those who will occupy positions of leadership, will have the courage to ensure that at last we build a human world consistent with the provisions of that historic Declaration and other human rights instruments that have been adopted since 1948.

Immediately, a whole range of areas of conflict confronts us, in Africa, Europe and Asia. All of us are familiar with these, which range from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Sudan on my own continent, to the Balkans in Europe and Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka in Asia.

Clearly, this Organization, and especially the Security Council, acting together with people of goodwill in the countries and areas concerned, has a responsibility to act decisively to contribute to the termination of these destructive conflicts. Continuously, we have to fight to defeat the primitive tendency towards the glorification of arms, the adulation of force, born of the illusion that justice can be guaranteed by the capacity to kill, or that disputes are necessarily best resolved by resort to violent means.

As Africans, we are grateful to the Secretary-General for the contribution he has made to help us find the way towards ending violent strife on our continent. We have taken heed of his report, which will reinforce our efforts to banish war from our shores. I have not yet read the report from page to page, but I will try to do so.

The very first resolution of the General Assembly, adopted in January 1946, sought to address the challenge of

> "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*resolution 1 (I), para. 5 (c)*)

We must face the fact that after countless initiatives and resolutions, we still do not have concrete and generally accepted proposals supported by a clear commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the speedy, final and total elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon capabilities.

We take this opportunity to salute our sister Republic of Brazil for its decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to urge all others that have not yet done so to follow this excellent example.

In an honest attempt to contribute to the definition of the systematic and progressive steps required to eliminate these weapons and the threat of annihilation which they pose, South Africa, together with Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden, will be submitting a draft resolution to the First Committee for consideration by the Assembly. It is appropriately titled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

I call with all humility on all Members of the United Nations seriously to consider this important draft resolution and to give it their support. We must ask the question, which might sound naive to those who have elaborated sophisticated arguments to justify their refusal to eliminate these terrible and terrifying weapons of mass destruction — why do they need them, anyway?

In reality, no rational answer can be advanced to explain in a satisfactory manner what, in the end, is the consequence of cold-war inertia and an attachment to the use of the threat of brute force to assert the primacy of some States over others.

Urgent steps are also required to arrive at a just and permanent peace in the Middle East on the basis of the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the people of Palestine and respect for the independence and security of all the States of this important region. We also look forward to the resolution of the outstanding issues of Western Sahara and East Timor, convinced that it is possible to take these matters off the world agenda on the basis of settlements that meet the interests of all the peoples concerned.

Similarly, we would like to salute the bold steps taken by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, this supremely important country of Africa, to enable it to return to democratic rule and a system of governance directed at serving the interests of all its people.

Together we are also faced with the scourges of drug abuse and the illicit traffic in narcotics, organized transnational crime and international terrorism. We strongly support the measures adopted or being discussed by the United Nations to deal with these challenges and commit our country and Government to cooperate fully in all regional and international initiatives to ensure that the peoples of the world, including our own, are spared the destructive impact of these crimes.

The world is gripped by an economic crisis, which, as President Clinton said in this city only a week ago, has plunged millions into sudden poverty and disrupted and disoriented the lives of ordinary people, and brought deep personal disappointment to tens of millions of people around the world.

President Clinton also said:

> "Recent press reports have described an entire generation working its way into the middle class for over 25 years, then being plummeted into poverty within a matter of months. The stories are heartbreaking — doctors and nurses forced to live in the lobby of a closed hospital; middle-class families who owned their own homes, sent their children to college, travelled abroad, now living by selling their possessions."

President Clinton said that "fast-moving currents" in the world economy

> "have brought or aggravated problems in Russia and Asia. They threaten emerging economies from Latin America to South Africa",

and he spoke of sacrificing lives in the name of economic theory.

He further recognized that with a quarter of the world's population in declining growth, the United States, in Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan's words,

> "'cannot forever be an oasis of prosperity.' Growth at home depends upon growth abroad".

I have quoted the President of the United States at such length both because he is correct and because he is the leader of the most powerful country in the world. Accordingly, we would like to believe that with the problem facing all humanity, and especially the poor, having thus been recognized, courage will not desert the powerful when it comes to determining the correct course to be taken, and following this course, addressing the challenge that has been identified.

The tragedy President Clinton describes goes far beyond the sudden impoverishment of the middle class to which he correctly refers. Poverty has been and is the condition of the daily existence of even larger numbers of ordinary working people. Paradoxically, the challenge of poverty around the globe has been brought into sharp focus by the destructive fast movements of currents of wealth from one part of the world to another.

Put starkly, we have a situation in which the further accumulation of wealth, rather than contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of all humanity, is generating poverty at a frighteningly accelerated pace.

The imperative to act on this urgent, life-and-death matter can no longer be ignored. The central challenge to

ensure that the countries of the South gain access to the productive resources that have accumulated within the world economy should not be avoided by seeking to apportion as much blame as possible to the poor.

Clearly, all relevant matters will have to be addressed, including such issues as greater inflows of long-term capital; terms of trade; debt cancellation; technology transfers; human resource development; the emancipation of women and the development of the young; the elimination of poverty; the HIV/AIDS epidemic; environmental protection; and the strengthening of financial and other institutions relevant to sustained economic growth and development.

Fortunately, it is no longer in dispute that serious work will also have to be done to restructure the multilateral financial and economic institutions so that they address the problems of the modern world economy and become responsive to the urgent needs of the poor of the world.

Similarly, this very Organization, including its important Security Council, must itself go through its own process of reformation so that it serves the interests of the peoples of the world, in keeping with the purposes for which it was established.

The issues we have mentioned were discussed in a comprehensive manner at the Twelfth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in the city of Durban, South Africa, earlier this month.

I am privileged to commend the decisions of that important meeting to the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole, including the Durban Declaration, which the Summit adopted unanimously. I am certain that the decisions adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement will greatly assist this Organization in its work and further enhance the contribution of the countries of the South to the solution of the problems that face the nations of the world, both rich and poor.

This is probably the last time I will have the honour to stand at this rostrum to address the General Assembly. Born as the First World War came to a close, and departing from public life as the world marks half a century of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I have reached that part of the long walk when the opportunity is granted, as it should be to all men and women, to retire to some rest and tranquillity in the village of my birth.

As I sit in Qunu, my village, and grow as ancient as its hills, I will continue to entertain the hope that there has emerged a cadre of leaders in my own country and region, on my continent and in the world, which will not allow that any should be denied their freedom, as we were; that any should be turned into refugees, as we were; that any should be condemned to go hungry, as we were; that any should be stripped of their human dignity, as we were.

I will continue to hope that Africa's renaissance will strike deep roots and blossom forever, without regard to the changing seasons. Were all these hopes to translate into a realizable dream and not a nightmare to torment the soul of the aged, then will I, indeed, have peace and tranquillity. Then would history and the billions throughout the world proclaim that it was right that we dreamt and that we toiled to give life to a workable dream.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Compaoré (*interpretation from French*): It is not without some emotion that I appear before this Assembly both as Head of State of Burkina Faso and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to extol, here in this sanctuary of nations, peace and harmony between human beings.

To promote peace and security for our era and for future generations is the objective of the nations of the world gathered here. It is also the message which I bring on behalf of Africa, being convinced that, armed with this immense hope, the Organization for African Unity and the United Nations, intimately linked, can make a reality of humanity's legitimate aspiration to a better destiny.

But first, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, as well as the other members of the Bureau, upon your election and the confidence placed in you to bring the work of this fifty-third session to a successful conclusion. I also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, on the energy with which he discharged his duties. Mr. Secretary-General, I would like to address my congratulations to you and your staff on the work you have done in so little time and offer my encouragement for the battles still to be won. It is entirely to the credit of the whole United Nations system that it carries the torch of peace higher every day.

The century which is drawing to its close will be remembered as one of great challenges. Seriously shaken by the two world conflicts, it also mustered the necessary resources to sound the death knell of colonialism and apartheid.

The liberation of colonized peoples and territories was historically necessary to ensure greater justice, tranquillity and well-being for our civilization, a civilization which finally understood that its survival lay in the organization of a genuine collective security. But the cold war, which led to bipolar confrontation exacerbated by ideological antagonism, made this security illusory. International peace and security have not been consolidated with the end of the cold war. Conflicts and disturbances which no authority could contain quickly followed. The resurgence of these crises and the inadequacy of the solutions proposed to resolve them bring to mind the plight of the Danaïdes, those mythological beings who were condemned to fill up a bottomless barrel.

The international community's failure to restore peace to Somalia and to prevent genocide in Rwanda will stand out in the history of the African continent. This failure has undoubtedly greatly contributed to awakening our somewhat lethargic consciences and forcing us to confront ourselves. It has revealed to Africa, which may still have had its doubts, the limitations of the United Nations.

The twentieth century thus ends with this acknowledgement, which, though shocking for more than one reason to those still lulled by the illusions of an age-old humanism, is at least realistic and belongs to the new era that is beginning. It is an acknowledgment that the United Nations, to which Africa has given so much, cannot do everything for the continent in its struggle to quell the numerous hotbeds of tension and ensure its development. The conclusion to be drawn from this fact is self-evident: Africa must recognize this reality and come to terms with it.

The thirty-fourth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Ouagadougou on 8-10 June 1998, devoted the thrust of its deliberations to this new reality, which challenges and commands Africa to take control of its own destiny.

Assessing the scope and importance of the responsibilities this entails, and which are theirs to assume, the heads of States took the decision to affirm their common will to focus fully — more than in the past — on the prevention, management and resolution of African conflicts. This commitment will certainly ensure greater visibility both for the Organization of African Unity and for the continent's various regional organizations in their search for peaceful solutions to these conflicts.

Though Africa's experience in taking control of its own affairs is still quite recent, encouraging results have been recorded in the management and resolution of certain conflicts, results which deserve to be saluted here. The task, therefore, is not beyond the capacity of Africans.

It is my ardent wish that this experience be extended to the whole continent, to the most ancient crises as well as the most recent. From north to south, from east to west, Africa must henceforth more systematically involve itself in the management and settlement of conflicts wherever prevention was not enough, where it did not succeed in guaranteeing peace.

To this end, initiatives to strengthen the continent's capacity to respond quickly to crises have been generated by Africans themselves. The advantage they have over all other initiatives is that they are African. In order to be developed and implemented, they need the unequivocal support of the international community. Subregion by subregion, they need to be developed, without exception and in harmony.

Preventing, managing and resolving the conflicts in Africa, whose number and complexity are increasingly

disturbing, requires solid and reliable mechanisms, appropriate to local conditions, mechanisms dedicated to the cause of peace, without which Africa cannot undertake sustainable development.

Clearly, the world's problems are immense, complex and alarming. The extreme difficulty of dealing with the establishment of peace in isolation gives multilateral diplomacy an ever-growing role in the resolution of conflicts.

The United Nations and regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity can bring a great deal to this task. The OAU, for example, possesses a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Created in Cairo in 1993, this Mechanism, whose effectiveness and practicality we are working to ensure, should to be the crucible in which a genuine preventive diplomacy can be forged.

That is all the more imperative since the consequences of conflicts, whether internal or international, are always devastating.

At the institutional level, therefore, we are equipped to respond to conflicts, and we also have the will to do so, for, as I emphasized during the thirty-fourth OAU summit,

> "the issue of security and peace in Africa is primarily of concern to Africans. No mechanism has any chance of succeeding effectively over time if it is imposed from outside."

> *Mr. Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Of course, external solidarity, if it is sincere, will always be welcome, given that in such a complex and changing field concerted and resolute action can only be beneficial. I have already emphasized that the management of conflict situations often requires the deployment of a level of human, material and financial resources beyond the capacities of our countries. Thus, international organizations should continue to show solidarity and partnership with Africa.

I therefore call upon the United Nations, with its wealth of experience, to contribute not only to strengthening structurally the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa, but also to provide technical and logistical support, since in the end we share the same ideal: assuring for our world the security and peace essential to its development and flourishing.

In this test of international solidarity, one thing is certain: Africa must definitively and first of all rely upon itself. We Africans are aware that in order to be masters of our destiny we must forge it ourselves. In response to this imperative no sacrifice has been spared by any State of our continent to establish an internal climate that is conducive to growth and sustainable development. After the years of uncertainty and stagnation, Africa has entered a new era, marked by clear economic recovery in the wake of bold reforms and characterized by greater austerity and rationality in the management of public and State affairs. This movement towards transparency in management and good governance has been accompanied by the establishment of homogeneous subregions in which the common destiny of Africans is daily forged, thanks to the sustained harmony of our principles and policies of integration, the ultimate objective of which is the establishment of an African economic community in the first half of the twenty-first century.

At present Africa faces two challenges: peace and political stability on the one hand, and sustainable development on the other. In their struggle and daily efforts to emerge from underdevelopment, African Governments and peoples are not alone. They know how to rely on the sincere support of their friends. This includes the operational development system of the United Nations, which I should like to commend for its dedication to the uplifting struggle against poverty and other forms of deprivation that afflict African peoples.

It is therefore regrettable that the United Nations agencies that are at the heart of the struggle for human security in Africa — such as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, to cite only two examples — are seeing their financial resources slowly dwindle while the mission entrusted to them calls for a redoubling of efforts and resources. That is why I call upon all to demonstrate their goodwill by contributing to the operational development system of the United Nations the resources it needs in order to assist Africa in confronting the challenges of peace and development.

The same goes for the question of debt. It would be desirable for the eligible countries to have their debt rescheduled at the same time as they are initiating reforms. It hardly needs recalling that debt is an unbearable burden for our still fragile economies.

Globalization offers us the means and advantages required to succeed in the boldest undertakings, provided that we clearly define our objectives and involve our peoples in the challenge of propelling Africa along the path of progress. It is incontrovertible that globalization, which implies a spirit of partnership, limits the independence and initiatives of States. But can humanity continue to flourish if the gap between rich and poor nations, between the affluent and the destitute within the same nation, grows inexorably?

The time has therefore come to rethink seriously the responsibility of international institutions in the regulation of the globalized economy in order to ensure a balance between economic growth and social prosperity. To do that, it is more than indispensable and more than timely to engage in a restructuring of the United Nations, and especially of the Security Council, in order to make it a true instrument for the application of the principles of justice, equity and democracy.

Africa accounts for one third of the Members of the United Nations. That is why it is unacceptable that, after more than 50 years of our Organization's existence, an entire continent — Africa — should be absent from the permanent membership of the Security Council, which, paradoxically, debates problems that are for the most part African.

The President returned to the Chair.

If the United Nations were to apply the principle of equity, would the sanctions against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya continue despite the opinion of the International Court of Justice and, above all, despite the decisions and resolutions of heads of State in the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement calling for those sanctions to be lifted? Today Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) has underscored the primacy of law for resolving this dispute, and the majority of nations within our world Organization hope that conditions of transparency will be met so that the trial can be concluded, in the interest of the victims and the Libyan people.

Moreover, Africa hopes that the Security Council will dispatch a mission of inquiry to the Sudan in the wake of the bombing of the pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum.

Africa forcefully condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and calls upon our world Organization to create the necessary conditions for a frank debate of this issue and for strong and concerted action against this phenomenon, while keeping in mind that unresolved angers and frustrations born of economic or historical conditions restrict our capability to act.

In the same vein, can the United Nations continue to deny the legal and international reality of a State such as the Republic of China on Taiwan, whose 22 million women and men are excluded from making any contribution to the activities of our Organization?

I am among those who believe that Africa is on the path of hope. I remain convinced that the economic, political, cultural and social obstacles that confront Africa call forcefully for its children to rediscover the road to unity that will allow them to take effective control of their destiny. Without union, Africa will remain on the periphery of history. Common sense tells us that we Africans must once and for all rid ourselves of that image of the outstretched hand that bedevils us and build the covenants of friendship, dignity and pride that will confer so much solidarity and generosity. This quest for independence does not deny the importance of solidarity among peoples. It means reaching a new understanding of human rights and the rights of peoples; it means taking on the responsibility of knowing how to remain ourselves.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the special honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, His Excellency

Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sanguinetti (*interpretation from Spanish*): Uruguay comes to the Assembly today with happiness, pride and even excitement at seeing you, Sir, a countryman of ours, representing Uruguay, as President of the Assembly. Uruguay was a founding Member of the United Nations and has been one of the its most active participants ever since, in all its endeavours. It has even contributed its best soldiers, who put their lives on the line every day in the difficult peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

Our country came to this Organization at the time of its founding with the hopes and dreams of a world that was being rebuilt in order to usher in a time of peace, prosperity and stability. It certainly did not come here with any dreams of power, which could have had no place in our country given its small land area and relatively small economy. But we did harbour the dream that has inspired all our great statesmen — that of being a small, model country which in the past century made secular education universal, free and compulsory and built a State of well-being with a solid middle class as the foundation of its political democracy. Thus did our country feel that it was a fundamental part of the democratic development of nations.

Unfortunately, we were not exempt from the upheavals and consequences of the cold war. As the Assembly knows, the cold war was bloody and fierce in Latin America. The hemispheres were locked in a state of conflict over positions: here guerrilla wars and there *coups d'état*, both manifestations themselves as part of a hellish dialectic in which democracies were wounded and sometimes fell.

The last few years have shown Uruguay to be a country which is making strides in its economy and prosperity and which, as the recently published United Nations Human Development Index states, is once again making progress. It ranks third among developing countries, and we can say that we have attained the best improvement in the hemisphere with regard to poverty indicators.

However, we come to this session not only with the concerns about its institutions and peace which always permeate the spirit of the Assembly; we come here also having seen the spectre of a crisis which began as an Asian financial crisis and which today is a global economic crisis that touches all of us. This undoubtedly deserves particular concern. When we see stock markets carried away by a microclimate of psychosis, and when we see so many irrational phenomena spread, we feel like Anatole France, who saw life as a struggle among various forces, of which we are not always able to know which is the strongest. At times it seems that science and intelligence predominate. At other times it seems that lunacy and fear prevail. This is also part of this phenomenon that started as a financial crisis and then became a very peculiar psychological phenomenon. The point is that, both as Latin Americans and as a member State of the international community, we must once again face this situation.

Shakespeare, who is often quoted in connection with major tragedies, said that fate dealt the cards but we were the players. That is our challenge today: how to play our cards in this crisis which could even affect not just finances and economies but also the democratic stability of our countries, our social peace and the fundamental values which inspire us.

In the 1980s Latin America went through very difficult economic years. This is referred to — mistakenly in my judgement — as the lost decade, for those were also the years in which we consolidated the strongest process of democratization in our continent, which today allows it to have more democracies and freedoms than ever before. Countries which had never before known democracy are now building republics and institutions and developing their societies.

The fact is that after that crisis our countries made enormous efforts at transformation. They lowered their rates of inflation, opened up their economies and began strong processes of integration — in the Andean area, in Mexico to the north and with us in the south, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, and now with Bolivia and Chile as associate partners, to the south. All of this meant that we had a Latin America which was growing again and which would once again be a place for investments; a Latin America which was able to harmonize the return of democracy and peace with economic growth.

We now find ourselves faced with the new crisis. What should we do? In our view, the first thing to do is to consolidate and support the Organization and the international community. We should do that here, in this institution, which is a hymn to internationalism, as well as in the economic area. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank — which is the main source of

financing for our hemisphere — are the tools we rely on today. We must strengthen them.

Indeed, this crisis will leave behind consequences once it is over. Somehow the debate that took place between Lord Keynes and Harry White, at the time of the establishment of the International Monetary Fund at Bretton Woods, hangs over the world today. The British economist held the view that it was necessary to have a central bank of central banks. I shall not bring in that debate here today, but I think that it will nevertheless have to take place once the crucial moments of this crisis are over, because of the need for prevention and for a market economy which actually works.

We must all feel and know that the origins of this crisis have been identified. First, there has been excessive speculation, which has been clearly reflected in stock markets. It also stems from macroeconomic imbalances in many States, which have not been able to correct those imbalances, mainly their fiscal gaps, that have been fundamental causes of this situation.

Fortunately, the North American economy and the European economy still appear to be solid. Japan is the country of which we are all hoping for a recovery so that the measures under way today will allow us to view much more calmly the future of this situation, which could very well continue for a long time. As the Brazilian Foreign Minister said today, the magnitude and the duration of this crisis are unpredictable, but what should not be unpredictable is the behaviour of States.

Therefore, it is essential that we act to bring to an end those financial imbalances and avoid the mistakes and temptations related to such crises. First, we should not believe that by isolating ourselves in neo-protectionism we will find a way out of the crisis.

In Latin America in the 1980s we had an external debt crisis. There were those who advocated not repaying the debt and returning in some way to more protected economies. There were those of us, on the other hand, who thought that the debt should be refinanced and that we should join the international community more actively and in that way grow again. Only by growing our economies could the external debt be made manageable in the future. The former, unfortunately, were not lucky and the latter, fortunately, were. In that way, we were able to refinance the external debt and return to investment, and growth enabled us to pay off the debt effectively and thus achieve better living conditions for our peoples.

Turmoil and speculation are not what are most needed for the prosperity of needy peoples. To the contrary, profit-making opportunities for speculators come at the expense of the majority.

That is the path that we see clearly defined today for this situation, and we must all redouble our efforts in that direction. We will also have to strengthen anew the international financial community so that there can exist a real international safety net that will allow us to work in peace.

Of course, the leading economic countries have a great responsibility. President Clinton said last week that this was the most important economic and financial crisis of the second half of the century, and no doubt it is. That is all the more reason for the major economies to assume their responsibilities and for smaller economies, such as ours, which basically seeks more and more equitable living conditions, to try not to bring bad news to the world, even while lacking the capacity and opportunity to be those who can offer the world good news.

We should thus protect ourselves from a dangerous neo-protectionism and continue to fight for increasingly open and transparent markets, from which the persistent subsidies in the large States disappear — subsidies in the United States and the European Community, agricultural subsidies which undoubtedly are a troublesome factor in international economic activities and must be left behind. If the crisis teaches us anything, it is that we must find balance, and balance will not be found on the basis of subsidies which continue to promote opportunity for artificial economic sectors.

We must also protect ourselves from messianic demagoguery, which is the political dimension of this crisis. For that reason, warding off and resolving the crisis through international cooperation and concrete measures are also very important in a democratic context. When such instabilities occur, messianic demagogues appear, all those pyrotechnists of prosperity who have always led peoples to misfortune and to whom we should not offer, through instability, another opportunity.

This is therefore a financial and economic crisis, and ultimately a crisis in political democracy. It is the fundamental chapter through which we must continue to work here.

Our world is living in disconcerting times. In 1989, it seemed, with the market economy triumphant over the

socialist economy and liberal democracy triumphant over the Communist world, that we were entering an era of peace and stability in which the old Hegelian dialectics would yield to a world of synthesis — what was termed the end of history, what others called the *pensée unique*. Undoubtedly, that was an oversimplification.

Today it would also be an oversimplification to believe that we have once again entered the crisis of capitalism. In my long political career, I have been invited many times to the funeral of capitalism. Times have definitely shown that the market economy, with its dynamics and its spirit of initiative, once again recovered, and this will happen again now because no one is pointing to a better alternative.

Therefore, we must not fall into another oversimplification. At one point we believed that the simple freeing of markets would bring about the miraculous result of achieving growth and equity; we cannot now return to the past and believe that through closed economies, through stronger protectionist measures or even through authoritarianism we will be able to resolve a situation that, now more than ever, must be addressed with the guidance of democratic principles.

No one has a clear road map. Thus, there is all the more reason to reaffirm the basic principles, the first one being political democracy, which calls on us, as President Clinton said earlier, to fight against terrorism, which through violence attacks democracy, in all its forms, from the outside; and to fight against the enemies which democracy generates from within. At times we have suffered from excessive political passion, which sometimes leads to divisions within countries, intolerance, racial hatred, abuse of economic power and abuse of the media; all of these factors are part of a democracy, but when used without ethical limits they may weaken it.

We also have a right to ask the citizen to participate. It is not through an alienated or indifferent citizenry that democracy will be strengthened. Democracy will be closely related to an efficient State, for only an efficient State can stand united if the objective is to improve the lives of our people, only a State which is not a mechanism for waste, but rather a strong instrument to promote the forces of society; to a market economy and increasingly open trade based on standards that protect us from unfair competition; and to a process of integration such as those being carried out in the Latin American countries to enable us to join the world with suitable economies to improve our production.

We must also think of the basic values of our societies, such as the family, which is the historic nucleus of our civilization. The weakening of the family has come at a high price. Today, the drug trade reflects the spiritual scourge of societies which, in their economic development, have lost sight of spiritual values. Such societies have weakened the family in a world where images, emptiness and passing trends have caused a vacuum that in turn causes the phenomenon of the search for artificial paradises that aim to replace a meaningful life. We must enhance spiritual factors to give democracies genuine content.

We must, of course, be pragmatical in economic matters, but pragmatism alone will not keep alive the hopes of peoples. We must strengthen family values, human dignity and the universality of human rights, as our friend President Mandela has said. We must all respect ethnic individuality; in the final analysis we are all the same. We must all fight against racial discrimination; we must all respect and be very mindful of cultural diversity. But no ethnic or cultural diversity can sanction the enslavement of women or the killing of men: we are speaking here of universal values that are essential to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that we must not only proclaim but must also practice.

As Toynbee said, "Civilization is a movement and not a condition, a voyage and not a harbour" (*Readers Digest*, October 1958). We must therefore clearly identify the stars that will guide us on that voyage. It is in those stars that Uruguay believes.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kumaratunga: At the outset, Mr. President, let me extend to you Sri Lanka's warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election. We wish you well and have no doubt that you will guide the work of this session with wisdom, skill and commitment.

The Assembly owes a debt of gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko for his wise and astute leadership as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

This year Sri Lanka celebrates the golden jubilee of its independence. We reclaimed our freedom in 1948, ending nearly five centuries of colonial domination. We have given shelter within our land to all the great religions of the world. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. We are a multiethnic and multicultural society. We are deeply committed to the democratic way of life. Our people have exercised universal adult franchise since 1931. We have a parliamentary system of government, with elections held regularly, where voter participation is uniquely high — as much as 80 per cent on average. We have an independent judiciary and free media. The rule of law is observed and respected. Fundamental rights are guaranteed and rendered justiciable. We are constantly alert to the protection of human rights, even in the face of grave provocation from some lawless elements that are bent on destroying our democratic society.

Shortly after the achievement of its independence, Sri Lanka became a member of the United Nations. In the preamble to the Charter, the founding fathers expressed their determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. They reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights. They pledged to establish an environment in which international law and treaty obligations would be observed, and to promote the economic and social progress of all peoples. The United Nations has succeeded in keeping its basic promise of saving the world from the holocaust of a global conflict.

But more than 50 years after the Charter was written, we cannot conclude that the world today is a safer place than it was when the United Nations was founded. Global nuclear disarmament remains a distant dream. Nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction have proliferated with no concern for the safety of humankind despite the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Members of the nuclear club that possess these weapons show no inclination to dismantle them even though the cold war has ended and conflicts between States have lessened. The United Nations has the responsibility to redouble its efforts to achieve global disarmament. That is a duty we owe to mankind, to unborn generations. We do not accept the thesis that these weapons are safe in the hands of some.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has been demanding for a long time that the Conference on Disarmament should establish, as its highest priority, a committee to commence negotiations on a programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time bound framework.

In 1976 my mother, Mrs. Sirimavo R. D. Bandaranaike, addressing the Assembly as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and chairperson of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, spoke of disarmament in the following words:

> "General and complete disarmament has been a declared objective of the United Nations and of the international community for nearly three decades.
>
> "Despite many initiatives taken by this Organization ... the world has witnessed not even the semblance of disarmament but a race for supremacy in destructive power, based on the myth that peace can be preserved only by strident and single-minded preparations for war and the refinement and sophistication of its techniques. It is, indeed, a sad reflection on the moral and intellectual standards of the twentieth century and of its values and priorities that so much of the world's resources, which might have been devoted to the eradication of poverty, ignorance, disease and hunger, are being [wasted on] the production of monstrous weapons ...
>
> "[We] do not accept the thesis that disarmament is the special preserve of Powers that

possess the paraphernalia of war. Every nation and every individual has a right to peace, and just as peace is indivisible so is the responsibility for its preservation. Hence the call of the non-aligned nations for a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and agreement for a world conference." (*A/31/PV.11, paras. 37-39*)

At the recently concluded Non-Aligned Movement Summit, held in South Africa under the chairmanship of President Nelson Mandela, the Movement once again expressed its preoccupation with the issue of global nuclear disarmament. In the years ahead the clamour for disarmament among the great majority of nations will grow in volume. The Non-Aligned Movement has consistently called for the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament to establish, as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations on a programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. In addition, there is also a proposal for a nuclear weapons convention. We have to address these challenges as we approach the new millennium. The longer we shirk our responsibility, the greater the danger that looms ahead.

Today I have the honour and privilege of addressing the Assembly as the newly appointed chairperson of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which met in Colombo a few months ago. SAARC represents one fifth of humanity. South Asia is heir to a rich and complex plurality of cultural and religious traditions of great antiquity.

Like any other association of sovereign States, we have our share of problems. But I wish to convey my confident belief that our summit meetings last year and this year have marked a turning point in the life of our association. Our leaders are aware of the awesome obligations that we jointly owe to the hundreds of millions of people who inhabit our region. We are determined to put aside the political differences that bedevil relations among some of us, in a common and united effort to improve the quality of life of our peoples.

The message I bring from the Colombo Summit is that the prospects for enhanced economic, technological, social and scientific cooperation in our region are exceedingly bright. It is the will of our leaders, as vigorously manifested at the Colombo Summit. I am deeply indebted to my fellow Heads of State and Government for their invaluable advice and cooperation, and especially to the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan for the magnificent spirit of friendship and understanding they showed for the collective regional interests and concerns.

SAARC too, like the Non-Aligned Movement, recognizes that the twin currents of globalization and liberalization which are swirling around us contain both the potential for prosperity as well as the seed of a dangerous new process of uneven development. It must be remembered that developing countries need special consideration in regard to the problems they face in globalizing their economies.

However, what is abundantly clear is that not a single State, not even the most powerful, can hope to remain immune from economic disease and contagion. Ripples have spread widely from the economic upheavals of East Asia and Russia. The maladies that spring from economic globalization require remedies which are global in scope, remedies which must take account of the ailments of all States and not be based solely on the prescriptions advanced by those who may seem to be secure.

United Nations bodies must play a critical role in all this, particularly by facilitating and fostering international cooperation for equitable development that could resist the economic contagion that now afflicts us. The international monetary mechanism has proved desperately inadequate in handling the recent crises. We now have to think in terms of a new financial architecture to obtain radical reforms of the international monetary system. This should aim at achieving a balance between the adjustments demanded as against available financing.

I wish to propose three areas of action that merit serious consideration: first, that a "lender of last resort" facility must be formulated to meet the problems of volatile capital movements; secondly, that effective international surveillance devices must be designed to anticipate problems before the demolition squads of speculators move in; and thirdly, that the resumption of the Special Drawing Rights of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) be a vital requirement of the proposed restructuring. The major voting Powers of the IMF, as well as the developing nations, will have to consider larger allocations than are now contemplated. In the meantime, we should beware of attempts to liberalize capital accounts before the modernization of national financial structures and the reforms of the international monetary system are in place.

A constructive dialogue between developed and developing countries must be pursued on the basis of mutual benefit and shared responsibilities. Closer consultation should be promoted between groups like the Group of 7, the G-77 and the G-15.

Institutions such as the World Trade Organization must live up to their declared aims and genuinely facilitate a transparent, rule-based trading system that would permit stable growth. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should not be neglected. It should be strengthened as the focal point in the United Nations family for the integrated consideration of issues of trade, finance, technology and investment.

More funds for development activity need to be diverted from the United Nations administrative budget. The United Nations Agenda for Development, which was launched with great expectations, seems to be losing momentum. Its implementation should not be delayed.

Development is not merely a matter of economic growth and financial enrichment, to be measured in statistics, which can sometimes be misleading and illusory. The totality of the human condition must be enhanced and improved. Our commitment and responsibility towards economic and social development should not be minimized and made secondary to other issues which, though important, do not touch on the well-being of humanity. It is a grievous indictment on us that the age-old problems of grinding poverty and starvation still exist in today's world. I appeal to the assembled nations not to allow ourselves to be beguiled or dazzled by the explosion of exciting new technologies, the seductive blandishments of global trade and high finance to the extent that the poor, the deprived, the desperate fall away from our agenda into the limbo of forgotten things. We must not forget that the least developed countries have special problems that cry out for attention. We must strive mightily, relentlessly, to banish these problems in the next century.

The G-77 has proposed that a third world summit be held in the year 2000 to mark the dawn of the new century. Sri Lanka supports the proposal as an opportunity for developing countries to chart their own agenda for development in the new era.

The countries of SAARC agreed at Colombo that to complement economic progress, a Social Charter should be drawn up for the benefit of our peoples in South Asia. This would focus on determining practical, basic norms in the areas of poverty eradication, the empowerment of women, the mobilization of youth, the promotion of health and nutrition, and the protection of children.

We must make a special effort to dissipate the effects of the discriminatory, social and psychological perceptions that affect the status of women. The SAARC heads of State or Government condemned violence against women as well as acts of discrimination and humiliation which further depress the dignity of women. There was particular concern over the plight of women and girl children caught in situations of armed conflict.

In Colombo, the SAARC States finalized the draft text of a regional convention on combating the crime of trafficking in women and children for prostitution, which will be signed at the next summit in Nepal. Within Sri Lanka, my Government has adopted a national plan of action based on the relevant conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and on the specifics of our own national situation. The Constitution of Sri Lanka enshrines the fundamental right of equality between the sexes. We have ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions guaranteeing equal remuneration and other benefits to women. We have strengthened legal provisions against harassment and sexual abuse of women.

With regard to children, my Government has recently passed legislation to set up a National Child Protection Authority directly under my supervision. This Authority deals with such issues as child employment, the sexual exploitation of children, education, health and the plight of children trapped in armed conflict. We have formulated a "Children's Charter" and a National Plan of Action to provide for the safety and protection of our children. While we are conscious of the tragic incidence of child prostitution and pornography in our country, we have also traced the insidious international linkages which aggravate the problem further. We urge the international community to tighten laws and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that those responsible for such heinous crimes will not receive refuge anywhere.

A particularly cruel offence against the innocence of children is their forced recruitment by a terrorist group in Sri Lanka to serve as suicide killers in the name of a cause they are too young even to comprehend.

This is just one sordid aspect of the activities of a terrorist group known as the Tamil Tigers — or the LTTE. They seek to dismember Sri Lanka, with the objective of creating in our land a monoethnic and racist

entity — an objective totally unacceptable to the overwhelming majority in the country and even to the very community whose cause the LTTE claims to represent.

We believe that ethnic grievances exist in Sri Lanka. I said so in my address to the nation at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of our independence this year. I said that the golden jubilee of independence was an occasion for reflection, as well as the renewal of hopes and aspirations. It was an occasion to savour applause for our achievements and also to rue the consequences of failure. I said:

> "We must also with humility examine our failures. We have failed in the essential task of nation-building. We have meandered and faltered along that path, whilst among our neighbours in Asia and in many other countries, peoples of various racial, religious and linguistic communities live in harmony. The causes of this failure will be judged by history. Others will apportion and assign blame.
>
> "Let us, those of us who have undertaken the responsibility to guide and govern the Nation, march towards the future in unison, putting behind us mean desires for petty personal or political gain. The Nation's need today is so great and urgent that it permits space only for largesse of heart and mind, which will supersede in the national interest all that is irrelevant and small."

My Government is firmly committed to redressing ethnic grievances peacefully through political discussion. We have presented a comprehensive proposal for addressing the ethnic grievances through a wide devolution of political power. The vast majority of our people, of all communities, have welcomed these proposals. Only the LTTE chooses to prowl the path of violence, resorting to terror to achieve goals which it alone espouses. However, we have kept the doors open to the LTTE to join other Sri Lankans in negotiating a settlement of all outstanding ethnic issues if it eschews terrorism and its bloody call for a separate State.

The LTTE claims to be a "liberation organization" while it murders hundreds upon hundreds of the Tamil people it claims to liberate when they disagree with the LTTE's terror politics. Several Tamil leaders of democratic political parties, including members of parliament and two mayors, as well as Tamil human rights activists, have been brutally murdered by the LTTE. Its claim to be a "liberation organization" is negated by its unilateral resort to violence and its constant refusal to put its claims to the true test — that of participating in an open, democratic, peaceful process of consultation with the people.

By contrast, in Palestine, Chairman Arafat pursues what he calls "the peace of the brave", confident not only of the justice of his cause, but also of the strength of support freely given by the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable right in Palestine. During the SAARC summit, we expressed growing concern at numerous setbacks affecting the peace process in the Middle East, including illegal attempts to change the jurisdiction and the borders of Jerusalem.

Over the past few years the Government of Sri Lanka has in various international forums strongly advocated the need for collective international action in order to overcome the scourge of terrorism. Our reasoning has been that a group like the ruthless LTTE, which continues to frustrate every effort at finding a negotiated political settlement to our ethnic problem, has found sustenance in the liberal asylum policies that prevail in some countries. This group, which recruits children as young as 10 years, indiscriminately targets innocent civilians, assassinates the elected representatives of the people, including Tamil political and human rights leaders, destroys places of religious worship and assassinates foreign heads of Government on their soil, is permitted to operate freely in many countries. It maintains an international network which engages in fund-raising, narcotics trafficking, trade in illicit arms, the smuggling of illegal immigrants and, in more recent times, maritime and cyber-terrorism.

Addressing the United Nations fiftieth anniversary celebrations in New York three years ago, I observed:

> "Concerted international action is essential to combat terrorism and to compel the terrorists to renounce violence and enter the democratic process. Unfortunately, effective action to that end has been frustrated through sterile philosophical debate about the nature of terrorism." (*A/50/PV.35, p. 9*)

I am happy to note that since then significant measures have been taken. The adoption of the United Nations International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings earlier this year has been a considerable moral victory for the international community in its fight against terrorism. Sri Lanka is hopeful that all States will speedily take steps to implement the necessary domestic legislation, aimed at

giving effect to the commitments made in the Convention, to ensure that terrorists are neither provided safe haven nor permitted to raise funds within the borders of one State to sustain terrorist activities in another State.

While we enact legislation, we must also be eternally vigilant to ensure that terrorists do not find loopholes in our laws to circumvent the emerging international consensus against terrorism. We are particularly conscious of the capacity of terrorist groups to resort to the strategy of using front organizations for raising funds which end up in the LTTE war chest to contribute towards murdering and brutalizing our people. Moral and legal sanctions against terrorists are not enough. Laws must be effectively implemented. Only by such concerted action shall we be able to ensure that terrorists are compelled to renounce violence and enter the democratic process.

Here I would like to thank India and the United States of America, in particular, for having recognized and declared the LTTE to be the terrorist organization that it is, as well as for encouraging my Government to settle this problem by political means. I would like to add here that this is an internal problem that Sri Lanka is fully able and ready to resolve, with the full support of its peoples. We will not tolerate any outside interference, while we appreciate all the support given us by our friends abroad in resolving this conflict.

If at this stage I mention Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar it is because I am personally aware of the loneliness, the anguish, the difficulties and dangers that a woman leader faces in political life. The people of Sri Lanka and the people of Myanmar and their Governments have been friends over many centuries. Our peoples share an invaluable heritage — the timeless message of the Buddha, the enlightened one who taught the world the meaning of compassion, tolerance and understanding. This message moves me to express the hope that political issues in Myanmar may be approached in a spirit of conciliation and tolerance.

In all this, a catalytic role can and must be played by the United Nations system. The United Nations has passed its half-century mark. The Secretary-General has described the United Nations as "a noble experiment in human cooperation". Last year was designated the year of United Nations reform, and we are happy that a major portion of the reforms introduced have been implemented. Some others require further study.

We are aware of the financial crisis the United Nations is facing due to the default of certain Member States in paying their contributions. We urge them to pay their dues fully, without conditions and on time.

We are disappointed that agreement has not been reached over the reconstitution of the Security Council to reflect better the generality of United Nations membership. The Council should be more representative, and its deliberations more transparent and democratic, thus responding to the concerns of all and shedding its image, not entirely inaccurate, of largely serving the interests of the major Powers.

In the closing years of the present millennium, the world is a far more complex place than it was when the United Nations Charter was adopted. The range and ramifications of the issues with which the Organization must contend have dramatically increased. Change in the orientation of the United Nations must keep pace with new realities. The Secretary-General's Programme for Reform is a step in the right direction. Yet nothing will contribute more to the success of the United Nations than the extent of Member States' commitment to the Organization's decisions. The credibility and strength of those decisions will itself depend on the transparency of the decision-making process and on how closely Member States identify with those decisions. If the United Nations is to continue on its voyage into the twenty-first century with renewed vigour, to achieve its objectives of peace, security, economic development and social reform, all its Members must be empowered to participate meaningfully and at every level of the decision-making process.

To this end, two important reforms must be placed on our agenda. First, the enlargement of the Security Council so that it will more fully represent two thirds of the world populace is an indispensable requirement. The developing nations and the regions of the world in which they predominate must have permanent representation on the Security Council.

Secondly, the crucial role of the General Assembly in the decision-making process of the United Nations must be recognized and guaranteed. The United Nations General Assembly is the supreme parliament of mankind.

Today the era of the cold war is over. Economic globalization is breaking down national boundaries to an extent that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. The world is truly on the threshold of a new order which surely cannot be driven any more by the narrow

national concerns that have paralysed the imagination of mankind for so long. Never before in human history have we been presented with the stupendous possibilities that surround us today of breaking the mundane bonds that bind us to banality and triviality. When the unconquered, unconquerable spirit of mankind is allowed to soar to its full potential we will achieve a world in which truth and justice prevail, a world which we can proudly bequeath to the unborn generations of our peoples.

Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, my late father, addressing this Assembly at its eleventh session, in 1956, spoke as follows:

> "In an Organization such as this, the service that a country can render ... is not to be measured alone by the size of that country, its population, its power or its strength. This is an Organization which expresses itself most effectively by bringing to bear a certain moral force — the collective moral force and decency of human beings. That is a task in which the weak as well as the strong can render a useful service, and I give the Assembly the assurance, on behalf of my country, that as far as we are concerned, every endeavour that we can make in all sincerity to assist in the achievements of those noble ideals for which this Organization stands will always be forthcoming in the fullest measure." (*A/PV.590, para. 42*)

Addressing this Assembly 42 years later, I make bold to say that Sri Lanka remains a loyal and dedicated Member of this Organization. We have made a contribution to the quality of its deliberations and to the implementation of its programmes. We are deeply committed to the principles of the Charter. We believe in the United Nations. We want it to be a strong, principled and effective body, the common inheritance of all mankind, not the preserve of a few wealthy and powerful States, but the guardian of all, especially the poor, the weak and the defenceless.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency The Right Honourable Tony Blair, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Blair (*United Kingdom*): Today's world offers one clear lesson: to survive and prosper, we have to work together better. That much is clear.

We share a global environment. We depend on each other for development and prosperity. Regional conflicts affect us all. Our peoples suffer together under the shadows of drugs and terrorism.

We can no longer separate what we want to achieve within our own borders from what we face across our borders. Rapid change of the sort we have seen recently can inspire fear. But we must face and conquer that fear together.

And if our finance, our trade, media, communications and even our culture are, day by day, more and more transnational, it would be strange and potentially dangerous if our politics remained locked in the old compartments built just after the Second World War. If the challenge is international, then the response must be international too. We must launch a new era of international partnership in which we modernize those institutions that allow us to cooperate and to work together.

The United Nations has a real record of achievement. That is true. But it is true also that it has had its failures. It has stood by or intervened ineffectively

when brutality was abroad. It has sometimes delivered words when action was needed.

But the United Nations is no more than its Member States. Its failures are our failures. The values of the United Nations Charter are as valid now as when they were written. But we have to find new ways of applying them.

So I believe in the United Nations, but I also believe it must modernize, and do so urgently. All parts of the United Nations need proper accountability to go with secure funding, better management and more effective coordination in all their activities.

Our Secretary-General has given us a lead. But it is now up to us, the Member States, to give him our full support. We must not allow reform in the United Nations to falter.

And let me emphasize today that we need to strengthen too the authority of the Security Council. This means broadening its composition: new permanent seats — for the developing world as well as for Germany and Japan. More non-permanent seats alone would be an unacceptable compromise. We have been talking about this now for five years. It is time for decisions.

We face many challenges, but none more immediate than the contagion of recession spreading from those countries currently in difficulty to affect the wider world economy. The solutions do not lie in misguided attempts to impose new panoplies of controls on international capital movements, or in a retreat from open trade. Rather, we must all recognize that the absence of proper financial structures and disciplines in individual countries, coupled with a lack of transparency, will be punished by the markets sooner or later.

However, we can act. We can devise new mechanisms to support a process of change: rules to encourage greater transparency in international and national financial dealings; better supervision and regulation of financial operators; adequate resources for the international financial institutions to deal with short-term liquidity problems; structural reform programmes for countries in difficulty, programmes that take account of the social effects of the restructuring we are asking for.

The only way to tackle such complex problems is a new, high-level, international collaborative effort. Global problems will require global solutions. As Chairman of the G-8, Britain will play our full part in ensuring the necessary look at the international financial architecture and how it can be improved for a new age. This is a priority, I believe, for us all.

However, we know that, unlike in the 1950s, this cannot be left simply to a few developed countries. Getting the financial framework right is only a start. We must create the conditions for sustainable development in all our countries.

The international community has set itself exacting targets. Most important is the target to halve the proportion of people living in abject poverty by the year 2015. Our own development effort is now geared to the eradication of poverty. I told last year's special session that we would reverse the decline in our development assistance. Recently we have announced that we are raising our development budget by £1.6 billion, and our support for health, education and water projects in Africa by 50 per cent. We have helped pay for the World Health Organization's campaign to roll back malaria. We are trying to put our money where our mouth is.

Of course, however, these development programmes only work if the conditions are right, and too much money has been wasted over the years. That is again why the work the United Nations is doing to create strong development partnerships is so important and must be given our full backing. I call today on all parts of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, to give top priority to effective coordination of their development efforts. The poor of this world will otherwise be the losers.

If we want to eradicate poverty, we also need to ensure that the least developed countries benefit from this global economy. That means, for example, letting them sell their goods without imposing tariffs on them. It means actively helping them benefit from globalization. And it means rejecting any false allure of protectionism.

The European Union is committed to zero tariffs for these countries by the year 2000. And I would urge all developed countries to follow suit.

We also have to ease the debt burden on the poorest countries. Britain has proposed the Mauritius Mandate to speed up assistance for those in the debt trap who are genuinely ready to help themselves out of it. By the year 2000 all qualifying highly indebted countries should have embarked on a systematic process of debt reduction, with

the aim of a permanent exit from their debt problems. But we need to make sure it happens. Again, a huge collaborative effort between the countries represented here today will be needed.

Development must not be at the expense of the environment. We all know this. But, again, this is a challenge to us. The success of Kyoto was a close-run thing. Buenos Aires will be hard work, but it has to work. Countries with the biggest emissions must come forward quickly with credible plans to meet their Kyoto commitments. We in Britain will shortly publish a consultation paper on how we will meet our obligations. And I hope that others will come forward and do the same.

The world has high expectations of the United Nations as the guardian of global peace and security. The United Nations should not get involved if regional organizations are better able to tackle a local conflict. But sometimes we must demonstrate collective global will. And if we act, we must act decisively. Clear principles must be our guiding hand. Let me set some out briefly.

First, prevention is always better than cure. The resources spent on averting conflict are tiny compared to the expense of peacekeeping once the guns start to fire. The United Nations is building up its capacity in this area, but it needs more support — and again Britain pledges to play its part.

Secondly, where we do have to send in the Blue Helmets, they should be given a clear and achievable task. There must be no repeat of Bosnia, where peacekeepers were inserted into a live conflict and told to make safe areas safe. But they were not given the means to do so.

United Nations peacekeepers need a way out as well as a way in. They must have the tools to do the job, and clear and effective command.

Thirdly, the United Nations needs to be able to act and respond fast. Fast action can prevent a conflict escalating, underpin a fragile truce, save lives. Again, we in Britain are trying to play our part. The reshaping of Britain's armed forces following our Strategic Defence Review is transforming our ability to contribute to peacekeeping and humanitarian operations: more and better equipped rapid-reaction forces, additional strategic lift and better logistics capability.

I can announce today that within six months we will conclude a specific agreement with the United Nations to ensure that it can make rapid use of what we have to offer when it is needed — the first such agreement by a permanent member.

Fourthly, peacekeeping has to be accompanied from the start by peace-building, to restore justice, democratic institutions, prosperity and human rights. The Security Council has to deal with the symptoms of conflict, not simply with its causes. It needs to work with the rest of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund if it is to have lasting impact. Again, I will be asking the Secretary-General to put to us new proposals dealing with the consequences and the causes of conflict to make this a reality.

Too many of those conflicts sill abound. There are few higher priorities than restoring peace to the Great Lakes region. The Middle East peace process remains an apparent deadlock. We have managed to make progress in Northern Ireland, and the support of the world community in our doing so has given us great strength and courage to carry on. We owe a debt of gratitude for that support, and I hope that the world will continue it. I believe now is the time for a further move forward in the Middle East, too. Again, we in Britain are ready to play our part in bringing this about.

I want to focus, however, on one other area of urgent concern: Kosovo. It almost defies belief that, yet again, the security forces of President Milosević are ignoring the clear will of the international community and inflicting brutality and repression on those they claim to see as fellow citizens. Of course, we recognize that the unacceptable actions of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army have contributed to the present appalling situation. But nothing can justify scorched-earth tactics and forcible creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

We have some clear responsibilities in this situation as an international community. First, we must make it clear that our patience with broken promises — phoney assurances that are not honoured — is exhausted. Continuation of military repression will inevitably lead to a new kind of response. Secondly, we must impress on both sides the need to negotiate, with a realistic appreciation of what is possible, and point the way to a mutually acceptable solution. Thirdly, we must make it clear that we have to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the refugees in Kosovo and prevent, by any means necessary, the humanitarian disaster which we can see just over the horizon as winter approaches.

We propose a new Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and demanding an urgent end to the trampling of the rights of the inhabitants of Kosovo. It should be adopted this week, and President Milosević would ignore such a resolution at his peril.

The international community faces another serious challenge in Iraq. The Security Council is unanimous in insisting that Iraq resume cooperation with the United Nations, and Kofi Annan courageously reached an important agreement with the Iraqi leadership about the United Nations Special Commission earlier this year. Again, this agreement has to be honoured, and we will play our part in ensuring that it is.

Finally, we face two global scourges which can undermine our institutions and, indeed, our way of life: drugs and terrorism. We all know the growing links between drugs and crime and instability in so many countries. The insidiously corrupting effect drugs have on all who come near them — growers, smugglers, pushers and users alike. We have, as we know, to tackle every link of the drugs chain, but we are in danger of losing sight of the size of the mountain we have to climb. If we are honest with ourselves, this is a war that we are risking losing, but we must win. Britain, again, is spending a further £200 million at the national level on our priorities, but our collective efforts need a much stronger focus.

We are not short of organizations looking at this problem; indeed, there may well be too many. But we are desperately short of results: cutting supply lines, eliminating illicit crop cultivation and stopping the profits of the drug dealers. We have a new instrument, the convention against organized crime. Too many countries still provide sanctuary for the proceeds of crime. We must demand together that those countries root out the traffickers and their dirty money — hit the drug barons where it hurts. The convention will provide practical means to achieve this, but the negotiations are dragging. Let us set ourselves the task of completing them by the millennium, at the latest.

The fight against terrorism has also taken on a new urgency. The past year's global roll-call of terror includes Luxor, Dar-es-Salaam, Nairobi, Omagh and many others. Each one is a reminder that terrorism is a uniquely barbaric and cowardly crime. Each one is a reminder that terrorists are no respecters of borders. Each one is a reminder that terrorism should have no hiding place and no opportunity to raise funds, and that there should be no let-up in our determination to bring its perpetrators justice. This applies to the new phenomenon of stateless terrorism as much as to its more familiar forms.

As a start, it is surely vital that all countries sign up to the 11 international conventions to ensure that terrorists have no safe haven. We have ourselves, again, in Britain, just passed new legislation to ensure we can tackle terrorist conspiracies aimed at third countries. But we must go further. We can hope to defeat terrorism only if we all devote ourselves to doing so. So I welcome the recent initiative by the President of France to tackle fund-raising for terrorism on an international basis. As Chairman of the G-8, I again offer today to host a high-level conference in London this autumn to deny the terrorists this means of support. Effective new measures on an agreed international basis could make a real difference.

I have covered many points in my speech to the Assembly, but my main point is really a very simple one. We face multiple new challenges as we approach the new century. Our only hope, as we all know, of tackling these challenges successfully is tackling them together. We need effective international cooperation and modern institutions to deal with our political problems and our economic problems. We need the United Nations system pulling together as never before. We need to revitalize and modernize our international institutions to deal with the crisis in the global economy. But, above all, we need political will and a sense of urgency. The problems of our modern world are too pressing, their consequences too immediate, their impact too far-reaching for us to hesitate or to look away any longer. We are being given a warning to act, to give purpose and direction in resolving these challenges we face together, or pay the price. And the time to do it — to respond to that warning — is now.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.